

## Bright Votes to Support Veterans, Troops

WASHINGTON, DC- Congressman Bobby Bright supported the Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations Act for 2010. The bill funds the Department of Veterans Affairs and funds military construction projects and support services at installations across the country. Additionally, H.R. 3082 contains funding for a new training facility at Fort Rucker, a project submitted by Congressman Bright. The bill received overwhelming bipartisan support and passed 415 - 3. It now goes to the Senate for full consideration.

"This Congress has made critical investments in both troops currently serving and veterans who have sacrificed for our country," Bright said. "I was proud to support this legislation, which makes historic investments in veterans health care and support services and needed construction projects for military installations. I would like to thank the Appropriations Committee for crafting a bill that funds top priorities we have previously passed through the Armed Services Committee."

The bill appropriates a total of \$109 billion for the Department of Veterans Affairs for medical care, additional claims processors, and facility improvements. Additionally, for the first time, VA health care funding will be appropriated a year in advance, ensuring that funding for VA hospital will never be held up due to Congressional inaction. Advanced funding has been a top priority for many veterans' advocacy organizations. H.R. 3082 also appropriates \$24.6 billion for military construction, including base facilities and housing. The bill represents a historic 12% increase in funding for the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Some specific provisions of the bill include:

- \$34.7 billion for medical services to treat more than 6.1 million American veterans.
- \$4.6 billion for mental health services to address Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and other illnesses.
- \$440 million for rural health services to treat the 3.2 million veterans who use VA services in rural areas of the country.
- \$1.1 billion for medical facilities to address the backlog in maintenance at medical facilities.
- Creates 28 new Veterans Centers and 30 new Community Based Outpatient Centers to provide readjustment counseling for veterans and their families.
- \$580 million for medical and prosthetic research, including specific funding for veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan.
- Adds roughly 1,200 additional claims processors to reduce 397,000 backlogged benefits claims in a timely manner.
- \$450 million to accelerate the Army's program to modernize troop housing facilities.
- \$200 million in additional funding for Army National Guard, Air National Guard, Army Reserve, Navy and Marine Corps Reserve, and Air Force Reserve construction to address important unfunded requirements.

- \$2 billion to eliminate inadequate military family housing.
- \$7.5 billion to implement base closures and realignments, and support the re-stationing of troops and their families from overseas to the United States.

Congressman Bright was able to successfully add funding in the bill for the Water Survival Training Facility (WSTF) at Fort Rucker. The facility will provide Fort Rucker with a world class training facility for both the Army Aviation Water Egress Center of Excellence and the Aviation Life Support Equipment Center of Excellence. This will allow Fort Rucker to conduct critical and required pilot survival training in a single facility. Congressman Bright secured \$401,000 to make final preparations for the project.

"I worked hard to get this project included in the Defense Authorization Act, and I'm pleased that the Appropriations Committee chose Fort Rucker's top construction priority," Bright said. "This money will go towards making final preparations before construction begins on the Water Survival Training Facility which, when completed, will give Fort Rucker the world-class training facility it deserves. This funding will clear the way for construction to begin on the project, and I will advocate for full funding of the training facility in next year's appropriations process."